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**SPEECH BY DR BALAJI SADASIVAN, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INFORMATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND THE
ARTS, AT THE PRIZE PRESENTATION CEREMONIES OF THE YOUTH
ASEAN STAMP EXHIBITION AND NATIONAL STAMP COLLECTING
COMPETITION, ON 1 SEPTEMBER 2007, 3.45 PM, AT THE
NATIONAL LIBRARY PLAZA**

Mr Pratap Parameswaran, Secretary of the ASEAN Committee of Culture and Information,

Mr Daniel Teo, Chairman, Singapore Philatelic Museum Board,

Excellencies,

Commissioners and Participants of the Youth ASEAN Stamp Exhibition and the National Stamp Collecting Competition (NSCC),

Principals, Teachers, and Students,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good afternoon to one and all and a very warm welcome to Singapore to Mr Pratap, friends from ASEAN and all our foreign guests who are with us here today. It is my pleasure to officiate the prize presentation ceremonies of the inaugural Youth ASEAN Stamp Exhibition and Singapore's National Stamp Collecting Competition.

2. This year is significant for ASEAN as it celebrates the 40th anniversary of its formation. ASEAN was established on 8 August 1967 with five member countries with the aim of preserving unity and peace in Southeast Asia. Today, the regional grouping has grown to 10 Member Countries with a total population of about 550 million and a combined GDP that is the third largest in Asia. Cooperation among ASEAN member states has gone beyond the political and security arenas. There is also active and exciting collaboration at various levels in the economic, social and cultural spheres.

3. The Youth ASEAN Stamp (YAS) Exhibition is one fine example of how people from different parts of ASEAN can come together in a unique way to share their experiences and build bonds of friendship. An inaugural project endorsed and funded by the ASEAN Committee of Culture and Information (COCI), the exhibition aims to foster inter-ASEAN understanding, exchange of creative ideas, knowledge and relationship through philatelic activities. This project is all-inclusive, with all the ASEAN countries invited to participate and I understand we even have Australia, although not an ASEAN member state, taking part in this exhibition, albeit at the non-competitive level.

4. Targeted at ASEAN youths, we have 88 participants from nine ASEAN countries competing in the YAS Exhibition. Vietnam is participating at the competitive level as well as a guest exhibitor and Cambodia is taking part as a guest exhibitor. If you take a walk around the exhibition later, you will see the creativity and richness of heritage and history embodied in the exhibits which these youths have put together. I laud the participants' efforts for getting the YAS Exhibition off a roaring good start and congratulate the winners for their fine work.

5. Today, we also honour Singaporeans who have taken part in the National Stamp Collecting Competition (NSCC), which has its genesis in the National Stamp Exhibitions or Singpex that were held on a regular basis since 1969. One

of the objectives of the annual competition is to promote the study of postage stamps and philatelic materials so as to enable the participants to have a better understanding of ASEAN and the world. Through the research work that goes into the exhibits, participants will invariably gain more knowledge on a wide range of topics and hopefully, create new friendships with both fellow Singaporeans and the world at large.

6. The NSCC is targeted at school students, from primary to secondary levels. The students have free play in terms of the theme for their philatelic exhibits and narratives, and they are rewarded for their hard work with Gold, Silver or Bronze awards. A total of 303 students participated in the NSCC. I am delighted to note that we have six Gold Award winners, from schools such as Hwa Chong Institution, Corporation Primary School and Hougang Secondary School. I am glad that these students do not consider stamp collecting an archaic or old-fashioned hobby, and instead, continue to keep this tradition alive.

7. Since its inception almost 170 years ago in 1840, stamps have been used to commemorate important events in a country's or region's history. They have been recognised as visual documents of a country. A stamp's design can tell us about a country's history, geography, scientific and technological achievements and culture. Thus, it is fitting that this year, all 10 Member Countries have issued special stamps to commemorate ASEAN's 40th anniversary. To evoke a sense of unity, all these stamps were designed around a common theme: 'Ancient or Modern Architecture', and featured iconic or historical buildings of the 10 Member Countries. For Singapore, the 120-year old building that houses the National Museum of Singapore was featured on the 40th anniversary of ASEAN stamps that was issued by Singapore Post on 8 August 2007.

8. In closing, I would like to commend all the participants of the YAS Exhibition and NSCC, whom I am sure must have spent many hours looking for the right stamps, researching on the topics and brainstorming the best ways to

present your exhibits. I hope that you have gained not only a wealth of knowledge but a greater appreciation of how stamps and philatelic materials are invaluable “windows” to a country’s heritage.

9. I would also like to thank the organisers of both the YAS Exhibition and the NSCC for putting up two splendid events for the public’s enjoyment. Special thanks also go to the COCI for funding the YAS exhibition; the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts, which is Singapore’s representative in the ASEAN COCI; the Singapore Philatelic Museum for coordinating the two events; the Ministry of Education; the National Library; Commissioners, and all the stamp clubs that have helped in one way or another to make this year’s YAS Exhibition and NSCC a success.

10. Let us present the prizes to the deserving winners. Thank you.

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